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041232Z May 04

UNCLAS HARARE 000748

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR AF/S  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JFRAZER  
USDOC FOR AMANDA HILLIGAS  
PASS USTR FLORIZELLE LISER  
STATE PASS USAID FOR MARJORIE COPSON  
USDOL FOR ROBERT YOUNG  
STATE FOR MARINDA HARPOLE

1E. O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ELAB PHUM ETRD ECON EINV PGOV ZI

SUBJECT: May Day- An Urgent Call for Help

11. (SBU) Summary: The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and government-backed Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU) held rival May Day celebrations. While ZCTU focused on tax policy and wages, ZFTU focused on health and safety in the workplace. ZCTU attracted crowds throughout Zimbabwe despite government intimidation. End summary.

ZCTU TURNOUT DESPITE INTIMIDATION

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12. (SBU) ZCTU leaders declared May Day events a success despite government attempts to scare people from attending. ZCTU estimates 10-15,000 in attendance while government and other sources estimate 5-7,000.

13. (SBU) According to ZCTU General Secretary Wellington Chibembe, The city councils of Norton and Chiredzi refused to allow ZCTU-sponsored May Day celebrations. Zanu-PF youth warned Mbare residents to stay away from ZCTU celebrations or risk eviction from their homes. A hotel owner in Kwekwe, (who also represents Zanu-PF on a local level) called the police and ordered all ZCTU personnel out of his hotel. The owner dismissed the manager who had accepted the ZCTU deposit.

14. (SBU) ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo exhorted the crowd to join new demonstrations in the coming weeks. ZCTU also emphasized tax reform, quarterly wage reviews, and a Z\$1 Million minimum monthly wage (US\$188). ZCTU argued that government should not tax people earning under the Z\$861,000 poverty line (US\$161).

15. (SBU) Other ZCTU leaders blamed low turnout on fears of government reprisals. Deputy General Secretary Collen Gwiyo also suggested poor advertising contributed to the low turnout. In Mutare, he estimated a crowd of 3-5000. Information Officer Mlamileli Sibanda noted several companies set up booths at the rally.

PRO ZANU-PF ZFTU DRAWS LARGE CROWD

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16. (SBU) ZFTU focused on health and safety in the workplace in rival May Day celebrations that drew 15000. They also touted success in reinstating or securing restitution for wrongfully or unfairly dismissed employees. Some in attendance advocated engagement amongst trade unions, government, and employers in a social contract dialog- a clear reference to the suspended Tripartite negotiations.

17. (SBU) Minister of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare Paul Mangwana failed to attend either the ZCTU or ZFTU events despite committing to speak at both events.

COMMENT

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18. (SBU) Reports of ZCTU's demise are premature. The larger ZFTU rally included a soccer match between two popular teams and famous singer Simon Chimbetu. ZCTU's ability to attract thousands without big name entertainment demonstrates its strong membership base. However, the continuing emphasis on demonstrations as a change mechanism once again suggests a lack of new ideas.

Sullivan